

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW WITH LIEUTENANT GENERAL WALTER K. WILSON, JR.
AND MRS. WILSON
PROFESSOR RICHARD T. FARRELL, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
MOBILE, ALABAMA, JULY 21, 1975

A*: You know, I told you how I stayed in a little family hotel in Casablanca. When I returned with my family, I felt I had to take the time to have my family meet the proprietor and his wife. They had been so nice to me for three months. Freddie was about five and we went around to their place. The minute we walked in, they greeted us, then produced a bottle of champagne and everything was just fine. After about 15 minutes, I heard the wife saying in pretty broken English, "You don't want another one," and I looked around and there was Freddie. Quietly, he had drunk as fast as he could. He was really thirsty. He had about five glasses of champagne before we discovered what was going on, and he'd never had anything like that in his life.

A-1: Needless to say, he had a nice afternoon nap.

A: When we got in the car, he sacked out and that was the end of him for a long time, but that's part of the social amenities.

A-1: Well, we had just gone to Atlanta from Mobile. I had to stay in Mobile and let the children finish the fall semester. So we arrived in Atlanta and barely settled there in a brand new house with a new yard--just a lot of mud and you can imagine what they did to the house. Weary came home from Washington and said, "How'd you like to go to Africa?" Africa: It was the last place on earth I'd ever hoped in my whole life to go. That was very exciting. A nice trip over and I thought well, we'll be here a year, and as it turned out, we were over there for two years.

*Responses marked A are those of General Wilson. Those marked A-1 are Mrs. Wilson's replies.

The way life in Morocco is--just nothing like it is anywhere else in this whole wide world. Their life, their attitudes, their dress, their foods. We had many exciting experiences. We met a Moroccan who had four wives, and he asked us down to lunch often. The first time we went, he said to be sure to bring some guests, so we asked 4 or 5 people. When we got there, he was terribly disappointed because we hadn't brought 25! The food was very exotic. They do not use a knife and fork. They use their fingers, and they eat what they call couscous, which is like a brown rice to us, soaked with a marvelous sauce and cooked with lamb. And the odd part--I'm sure it takes many years of practice to do it--they took a small amount in their fingers and tossed it around and made a perfect ball and then took their thumb and popped it into their mouths. Fortunately, they gave us a very big napkin. You tucked it in the front, otherwise you would have had rice all over you. We lived near the bullring, and we could hear them say, "Ole," "Ole."

A. It was the only place I could find, as I had little time for house-hunting before I had to leave for Washington. I had arranged for the upstairs in a family house in which the lower floor was used as an office. They let us rent the upstairs, and it was only a half a block away from the bullring as she said, music and all. We went to several events there. On one occasion 'I was the president of the bullfight program. The funniest time was when we went to Torro ball, it was really soccer with a young bull loose in the arena. They had on bright yellow and bright red shirts, and they were playing soccer. A young bull was in there and stopped the whole play by getting in the goal. The goalkeeper wouldn't go back there, and the attack wouldn't run in close enough to the goal to get control of the ball. It was funny as heck.

A-1: We employed Arabs as servants, and they could not speak English. We couldn't speak French or Arabic, so there was a matter of gestures and things.

A. In the first temporary home we had no servants.

A-1: Yes, we did, we had a little boy who always wore his fez when he served. Anyhow, he didn't do so

well, couldn't cook well or couldn't speak well or anything else. So then we had a girl, and she spoke a little bit of English.

A: Then we moved to a very nice house in a better part of town. No screens--fancy living place with no screens!

A-1: You could ride around Casablanca, and you always knew where the Americans lived as they had ordered screens from Sears. What is the French word for dog?

A: Chien.

A-1: I was trying to get across what I wanted for lunch and how I wanted it prepared. Not speaking Arabic or French and the fatima not speaking English, it was quite a chore. So I did tell her one day, we were to have "Chaud Chien." "No Madam! No Madam!" she said. She thought I really meant dog. She was horrified. Then we moved from there out to Nouasseur on the airbase.

A: Oh, but this house in Casa was in a very lovely area and had a big high brick wall all the way round the garden but there was practically no heat. There was hot water in the kitchen. There was hot water in one bathroom.

A-1: But there was not even a hot water spigot for the kitchen. You can imagine washing dishes in cold water!

A: And no heat, there was one gas burner on the landing between the lower floor and the upper floor. That was the total heat. And we ended up borrowing what we call "little stinkers"--little kerosene heaters--that you could carry around. You turned them on until it got the chill off, but by then you couldn't breathe so you'd turn the things off. You either were breathing and cold or not breathing and reasonably warm. Oh, it was something.

A-1: Oh, there were many things strange to us. They were so interesting you forgot all of the unpleasant part and lived through it.

A: Well, I came home from the office on one occasion and got within two blocks of our house. There was a ring of troops as far as I could see. I came to a halt and said, "What's going on?" Well, they're surrounding the Medina, which is the native city, because they were afraid that there were going to be some riots. But the trouble is my house was two blocks inside this ring of troops and two blocks from the Medina. And I finally had to talk my way through the ring, and we kept the doors closed pretty tight that night.

A-1: When we were invited to this Caid's (a Muslim local administrator's) villa for lunch, which was around twelve-thirty or one o'clock, you sat at low, round tables. They gave **you** a huge napkin to put on your lap but no knives and forks of **any** kind. Then a servant came by with a big silver bowl in the center of which was a soap dish. They had a pitcher of warm water in the other hand. You washed your hands with soap, and then the servant poured the water from the pitcher over your hands to remove the soap, and then everyone dried on the same towel.

A: The first time we got involved in this we went to a Fantasia--a kind of county fair. Three of our senior U.S. senators--Duff, Stennis, and Case--were to be the featured guests at this Fantasia. It was an hour's drive from Nouasseur. We drove down there with Colonel and Mrs. Carlson, all of us with our children. We went in picnic clothes since we planned to tailgate lunch. About eleven-thirty, some French officers began coming up and said was the senior American present, and they said, 'Where are your senators?' Well this was in French, but I understood what they were saying, and I said, 'They aren't my problem.' Twelve o'clock came, and they said, "Your senators have not come yet, and it's time to go to the Drffa (meal)." I said, "I'm sorry." They said, "You will have to represent them." Oh " I said, "I can't do that, I've got my family here." "Well bring your family." I said, "I can't do that because besides two boys, I have my wife and two daughters." They said, "You must come." So we got in the car and drove up on the hill to a beautiful large tent all decorated with rugs on the ground and small low round tables surrounded by pillows and hassocks. It was jammed

full of about 200 men seated at the tables, and at least 50 servants stepping 'around and over the guests. All the men were talking and laughing when I marched in ahead of my troops, my wife and two daughters and two sons. When we walked in that door and the first female entered, there was dead silence. We were guided to the place of honor where they seated us around a table, and they commandeered a man from an adjoining table to join us. This is when we met our Caid. Apparently he was drafted, because he could speak French. He had served in the French Army as a captain in World War II. He was very colorful and was dressed in a beautiful sheer robe through which his pistol and jeweled knife showed. He did his best to be a charming host but was handicapped because he was the only one who could understand French. I was trying to interpret. The atmosphere in the tent remained strained, but after the handwashing exercise described above, the servants began bringing the food.

A-1: It was roasted lamb--a complete roasted lamb.

A: It was on this big tray. Freddie saw something down underneath the lamb that he wanted, and he stuck his little hand down there to get it. It was hot as fire, and he went "Owoooooo" at the top of his lungs. Well, all the men looked, and they all laughed, and that broke the ice. Everything was all right from then on.

A-1: It was in an arid land close to the foothills of the Atlas Mountains.

A: As I said, he'd been a captain of the French Army in World War II. A Caid is a kind of hereditary tribal leader or religious magistrate in a rural area. As I stated, you could see his pistol right through his outer robe, and the kids saw them. He was a very charming man, but he spoke nothing but French and Arabic. So I had to try to translate everything. It was tough, but we got by. We had him to our house several times afterwards, and he would have us down there.

He was as handsome as Rudolph Valentino playing a shiek. He was also as charming as he was handsome. They are allowed to have four wives.

Wives never attend any social functions whatsoever. They never go with them anyplace.

Q: Did that cause you problems in other formal occasions?

A: He invited them all, and only the men would come;

A-1: But the women never came, and the wives never appeared when you were guests in their home.

A: He was a good Muslim. He did not drink any alcoholic drinks. Luckily, we solved that. We had parties for him to return favors, and we had the usual things you have. But also we had coffee frappe in a big bowl with ice cream floating in it. I finally could get across to them that -there wasn't any alcohol in it. Boy that coffee frappe would go down in no time at all: It was a fine solution. I like it also,' and since I don't drink alcohol, I helped drink it.

Now his house was way down in the country. We drove about two hours I guess to get there. It was almost down to the mountains. Their guest quarters are in an open court with the rooms all around this rectangular court--kind of a covered walkway--but open to the sky in the center with a beautiful fountain and shrubs and trees, all in the patio. And that% as far in his home as you get. That's the guest court. There the women don't show. He brought his sons in and proudly showed them off. There were about ten or something like that. But we never once met the wives.

A-1: The luncheon was interesting. They started with this roast lamb. It was roasted just beautifully. you reached over and pulled pieces off with your fingers and ate with your fingers. When they had this couscous I was telling you about, then they had string beans that you ate with your fingers. They had what they called a pigeon pie, which was sort of a dessert with layers of very flaky pastry and this filling that was supposed to be pigeon. I thought sometimes it was chicken, but I wasn't sure. It had cinnamon and sugar and all this sort of thing. It would be delicious, and always we wound up with champagne, of course. And you spent hours sitting and enjoying eating this wonderful Arab feast.

- A:** Then **you** moved to another **one** of these guest rooms around the patio and had **your** coffee. And they'd serve more liquor. But what tickled me, I asked the Caid, I said, "Well, how do you like this having four wives?" "Well," he said, "do you ever have any trouble with your wife?" I said, "Occasionally." He shrugged and indicated to multiply this by four. Of course, this was in his French and my pidgin French, but we got along very well.
- A-1: He owned phosphate mines down in his area in Morocco.
- A: He and his tribe, I don't know what was his and what was theirs. He was well off, but I think he had to go to Paris later on account of the revolution, when the French were ousted, because he'd been too strong a supporter of the French.
- A-1: Well, I think El Glouie was the richest man in that part of Africa and he was definitely not pro-French.
- A:** He was the pasha or chief of Marrakech and had influence over a large area.
- A-1: Yes. So when they came back into rule, he had these men come in and crawl on their hands and knees--the ones who had been pro-French. He had them crawl on their hands and knees and call to him and bow down to him and not until then were they forgiven.
- They also have what they call Ramadan, which is an equivalent to Lent in this country. And they don't eat or drink from sunup to sundown.. Absolutely nothing. But they get up and go to work and go to their jobs.
- A:** The construction was going on.
- A-1: Not a drink of water nor a bite of food, and the sun was beastly hot out there in the middle of the day.
- Q: They continued to work?
- A-1: Yes.

A: Well, you can imagine finding the workmen in all kinds of places, including in the rooms we were building. They just disappeared. They slept in the daytime when they could, and they ate all night.

A-1: We went to dinner one night and there was a Caid there. He had on his beautiful julaba, and they always shot a gun at sunset, which meant that you could eat and drink. Seeing him sitting there, you could see him dying for a drink of water or liquid of some kind, and finally the gun was shot, and boy did he grab a glass of water:

One interesting thing about the Fantasia that we attended, the kind of fair we were telling you about, there were no trees, very few trees then, and they had their tents lined with oriental rugs. The dirt floors were covered also with rugs. If you didn't step in the dirt, you stepped on the beautiful, beautiful rugs. It was quite an experience. I'm glad I don't live over there. When you go in your car, you'd see the families going down the road. The men would ride a donkey, and the women and the children followed walking behind the donkey. I didn't think very much of that.

A: Tell him about the flowers they used to sell you on the side of the roads.

A-1: Oh, the fields were filled with yellow and white daisies, and black-eyed susans, poppies, and flax. I didn't fly over there, but Weary did. He said it looked like a magnificent oriental rug from the air, immediately following the rainy season.

A: Well you see it's very dry except for three months. At the end of that three months' rain, the flowers are knee-high in what was normally dry, flat, hard dirt.

A-1: You wondered how they possibly got through all of that baked soil.

A: They'd pick these flowers and weave them into a kind of bouquet. The stems would be nearly as big around as your two hands could form a circle.

A-1: A cone, it was cone shaped, I remember.

A: Yes, and all these flowers came out of the top and they'd have a most unusual bouquet.

A-l: And heavy, oh, it was the heaviest thing you can possibly imagine, but it was a wonderful, wonderful experience.

A: Were you prepared for some of the local customs? I know you've lived and traveled extensively before, but were you prepared or were you sort of left to adjust on your own?

A-l: You adjusted on your own, don't you think, Weary?

A: Oh, we adjusted on our own, and it wasn't too bad.

A-l: Now, you know, when the families are going to some foreign countries, they have to take a course in that language, but not then. You just did the best you could. It was amazing. We finally had a houseboy, excellent and just marvelous, but he couldn't speak English. I couldn't speak Arabic or French, but by then I spoke "kitchen" French. I finally learned to speak enough kitchen French. I would do a recipe once with him, and that was it. He could do it by himself just perfectly after that. We'd go through gestures, and we'd come up with what I had said that we would have for dinner or for lunch. It just worked out fine.

A: Well, we hired a yard boy that spoke only Arabic, no French. I figured this was our chance to learn a little Arabic, but he learned English. We didn't learn Arabic. He lived about a mile away in a tent out in the middle of the field with his family, his mother, his wife, kids. He invited us over to his house, for tea I guess. So he proudly led us over there riding his bicycle, and we followed in our car. When we got there, I'm telling you, you have never seen such clean dirt in all of your life. The compound was absolutely bare, but they had a clean floor. We sat down, but none of the family sat down with us. They brought tea and cakes of some kind. It was a treat, and with his native curtsy and so on, really it was very nice. He served us in the best he had and offered his best in cakes.

A-1: It was a charming experience.

Q: What about the PX and the commissary and things of that sort?

A-1: Oh, yes, they had them out at Nouasseur.

A: Yes, we had them also with the construction. A part of the CPFF contract, they ran a PX and a commissary.

A-1: You used scrip in the commissary and PXs, and you used francs in the construction camps and in the local markets, of course.

A: The contractors' personnel were not supposed to have scrip. That as for the military and the government. They were supposed to use local currency. It was a little hairy trying to keep that straight. Then, of course, these construction workers were making good money.

Q: Is it a good place to go about Christmastime?

A: Yes, I'd say so. The rainy season starts about late January, doesn't it, Jeanne?

A-1: Yes.

A: Now, it's not hot at Christmastime. Of course, in the middle of the day, it's very comfortable. They don't have heat. We had my mother visit us over there, and we went up to Spanish Morocco over Christmas. We stayed in a big hotel with high ceilings and no heat and darn near froze to death. The food was interesting--and good.

A-1: They never served dinner before 11 o'clock, and you were just famished by then besides being sleepy on top of that.

A: Plus being cold.

A-1: Everything was quiet in the streets until around six o'clock, and then the populace came out. They walked up and down the streets and chatted and sang and enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

A: My mother would go to bed with everything on she owned, coats, shoes, everything.

A-1: It's pretty country. I also thought parts of Germany were beautiful. Southern Germany was lovely, but the Scandinavian countries; Norway, Sweden, we loved Oslo; we thought it was just beautiful.

A: I'd say October, November, December, and April and May were the prettiest times, wouldn't you?

A-1: Yes.

A0 The rainy season would end about early April, and this gorgeous vegetation was everywhere. We skimmed off a baseball diamond every year in a kind of a little parade ground here, around the construction area, and played softball. It was utterly, completely burned over ground and the next spring when the rainy season came, it would be knee deep in poppies.

Q: What was the size of the Army's units there? It must not have been too terribly large.

A. Ours, you mean?

Q. Well, yours plus the others.

A. In other words, the Air Force?

Q. Yes.

A: There wasn't anything to begin with hardly. We were building their facilities. It got to be a fairly good size. They were big airbases before we finished, but if we hadn't had the construction contractor there and all that, there wouldn't have been hardly anybody. But there must have been 15,000 of the construction contractor's employees, about a third of them Americans, at basically five locations. So there was a pretty good number.

Q: Did they do any road improvements that would benefit the local economy besides having a military importance?

A: No basically as a result of us being there, the French government itself, or the Moroccan government, improved main, highways leading to the five major airfields which would help the civilian economy when it was over. Plus there were an awful lot of people living off the civilian economy. So there was new construction going on all the time providing new housing for the combined American personnel. Also, support facilities sprang up. So the country was built up to a major degree as a result of the effort involved and the number of people.

Q: Well, that's true. That was another country primarily. No, actually this was a big shot in the arm economically to Morocco. It was that much payroll. While most of the Americans didn't live off the economy really, there was still a whole lot of that money that found its way into the local economy.

A-1: There were only a hundred sets of "prefabbed" family quarters out at Nouasseur. That's all they had out here, and we had no telephones. We had one when we first got established in Casablanca, but our friends didn't have one. We couldn't speak French, so we did not use them. When we got out to Nouasseur there were no telephones at all. We just got along beautifully. We sent notes by our husbands to the office, and they would give them to the other husbands. It was a successful operation.

A: It was a little construction village, prefabricated houses and things like that, very comfortable. Some of them were better than others. We lived in one of the better ones when we moved out there. It was a very comfortable house. It had one simple stand-up wall heater in the whole house, but we did have hot water.

A- 1: Lots of hot water, which was a **joy**.

Q: Where did you get water during the dry season? Did the Corps have to undertake all that, too?

A: We too, had developed our own water supply and sewer system.

Q: And that would be the same in Saudi Arabia, the things that they did in Saudi Arabia?

A: Well, there were even more problems in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia was just one heck of a lot less pleasant and hotter than Morocco, and utterly barren. Just a wasteland. Now in Morocco, starting with the coast and moving in for about 50 miles, you got a fair degree of vegetation. Maybe when you got to about the 150-mile mark it's just awful dry. But the first 50 miles is pretty well cultivated.

A-1: We used to go up to Port Layoute, which was the naval part of the U.S. presence over there. We'd go to the resident general's home, which was a gorgeous, elaborate palace.

A: But that was pretty close to the coast, too.

A-1: Yes, but I was going to say that we were invited for lunch, and we discovered the French don't use tablecloths or placemats. They have beautiful tables, lovely wood and all, but not a sign of a mat of any kind. Behind nearly everyone seated at a luncheon table for 25 or 30 people were the Senegalese. They were great big strapping people. They always wore a fez, of course, voluminous sleeves tight at the wrist, baggy pants coming to the knees, and then boots on top of that. You just had individual service. It was a fascinating thing. I'll never forget it. When the Moroccans were getting ready to run the French out of Morocco, we were up there for lunch that day, and the resident general and his wife, of course, were at the head and foot of the table and an aide came in and whispered something to the resident general. Lunch went right on very smoothly, and what the aide had told them was that they would be leaving the minute this luncheon was over and going back to France because he was ordered out of the country: There was not a change of expression on that man's or that woman's face. They went right through the whole business. It was just fantastic to see it.

At night when you went to town, which was not very often--we were 18 miles out of Casablanca when we moved to Nouasseur--the natives would start

bringing by donkey carts of things into what they call sukes, their markets, and they would bring a huge piece of canvas and sit down in front of it and sell their products, beautiful vegetables, perfectly gorgeous vegetables. At night, all these little carts, these were two-wheel carts with a donkey pulling them, would be going down the road; and they would have a lantern tied on the back end, and that's the only way you knew that there was something in front of you. You had to be very careful.

Q: Did that town itself have any street lights or anything of that sort?

A-1: Yes, yes, downtown in Casablanca.

A: It was a European-looking town, the main part.

A-1: They had magnificent hotels. Oh, the hotels were just magnificent. We would go to a big dinner in town. They would make elaborate things such as a basket made out of french-fried potatoes woven in the shape of a basket and filled with more french-fried potatoes. You ate the whole basket. They'd have a pheasant, feathers and all, or they'd have a duck. It would be all dressed up, which was not very appetizing, but it was very interesting. They always passed it around and showed it to all the guests before they served it. Are you traveling abroad as part of your research?

Q: Well, we're going to Italy.

A-1: That is exciting. Going any particular place in Italy?

Q: Well, we'll be at Livorno-Pisa. I guess we'll spend some time in the Naples area, and we're supposed to then go to some of the sites where the Corps has done some work. They specifically want us to go to Saudi Arabia.

A: Taking your wife with you?

Q: Well, I don't know whether she'll go there or not, I may leave her in Turkey.

A: If you get to Ankara, go see the Hittite Museum on top of the little hill in the old city. It's utterly and completely fascinating. They've got some artifacts that go back to 2,000 B.C. from the people in the Bible they talk about; "the Hittites came down out on the hills." And if you get to Cairo, go to the National Museum. Those are the only things I ever tell people to go see. I feel confident everybody will take them.

A-1: Tell your wife to get some Halozone pills because the water is terrible over there. You'll have all kinds of trouble, all kinds of awful tummy troubles if you don't, if you try to drink the water. Just dissolve one in one of those bottles of water.

A: Well, you kind of get tired of drinking nothing but wines. You get a wine bottle. Drink it and refill it with water and put a Halozone tablet in it. Then you can just drink it safely.

A-1: We had a group going from Mobile to Spain to a sister city, and we had told several of them to be sure to get some Halozone pills. They didn't for some reason, and they really had their problems.

Q: Well, that's very good to know.

A-1: You get so you want a drink of water. It's the nicest thing you can think of.

Q: What did you do when your children got ill or something, would you have to take them to the naval facility?

A-1: You mean in Morocco?

Q: Yes.

A-1: Oh, they had a hospital right there and doctors.

A: Well number one, we built one. So as the construction went on, life got smoother. And number two, the contractor had to have some medical facilities right from the beginning, and we were eligible to go to those, too.

Q: Can you recall anything else you want to comment on?

A: well, what really intrigued me, we had a terrible time with the specifications and design of the paint shop. Nouasseur was a base.- I mean not just an airbase but a logistical base. It had a lot of storage space for all the whole Middle East and everything else and a lot of rebuilt capabilities and so on. We started a paint shop. We got it designed and started building it. We got it about half built with a big air tunnel below the floor, and they decided to cut down on the scope.

Well, at that stage in life, we were halfway done. We had all this concrete, and we had all the materials on hand. I said, "The cheapest thing for you to do now is either to stop and forget it, or else build it the way it's designed." But the Air Force said no, so we cut it in half. It took about a year to modify everything else. When I went back there the next time, which was a year or so later, it was complete. It had cost 150 percent of what the bigger one would have cost, and they had two tricycles and a bicycle in there being painted. It's expensive to change your mind. Of course, that whole project had changed its mind with the development of greater range in the airplane, they didn't need it anymore.

Q: Well, how do you account for that--the speed, the decision to do one thing and then changing their mind? Did it have anything to do with Korea?

A: Definitely. You see that's the reason we started it in 1951. But by 1955-1957, Korea wasn't very much of a tinderbox. But the reason that they were moving so fast in the first instance was the fear of Korea expanding and the Chinese and Russians getting in on it, too. But you can't tell. That little magazine article, you know the one you've got. It's got that same Napoleonic sentence in there. "The future of the world depends on you completing these fields." He believed it, they told him that, and he took it for the gospel. I found out over the years that you have to be just a little bit of an SOB to succeed in that kind of business. If you're too honest and sweet and kind, you just get left out there in left field.